The Literary Gift Book of the Year

TWENTY-FOUR PORTRAITS

William Rothenstein

GRANVILLE BARKER,
MAX BEERBOHM,
ARNOLD BENNETT,
ROBERT BRIDGES,
A. CLUTTON-BROCK,
T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON,
JOSEPH CONRAD,
JOHN DRINKWATER,
Sir EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.
Sir JAMES FRAZER,
JOHN GALSWORTHY,
ANDRÉ GIDE,
EDMUND GOSSE,
LORD HALDANE, O.M.
THOMAS HARDY, O.M.
A. E. HOUSMAN,
W. H. HUDSON,
DEAN INGE,
T. E. LAWRENCE,
JOHN MASEFIELD,
GEORGE RUSSELL, (A.E.)
G. BERNARD SHAW,
Sir J. J. THOMSON, O.M.
H. G. WELLS.

The artist has during many years made drawings of his friends and contemporaries. A selection of these is here reproduced by Mr. Emery Walker by the collotype process. Biographical studies to accompany the portraits are contributed for the most part by the persons whose portraits are included.

TWENTY-FOUR PORTRAITS

by William Rothenstein

With critical appreciations by various hands

NEW YORK
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TO THREE NOBLE MEN
MAX BEERBOHM JOHN DRINKWATER AND WILLIAM SIMMONDS
WHOSE ENCHANTING SOCIETY AND EQUALLY
ENCHANTING WORKS WERE THE CROWNING COMFORT
OF A LONG SOJOURN IN A COTSWOLD VILLAGE
THESE TWENTY FOUR DRAWINGS ARE
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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Preface

The twenty-four drawings here reproduced by Mr. Emery Walker were selected from among many which it has been my happy privilege to make of my friends and contemporaries during the last few years. Two dozen are all too few where there are so many whose conduct and work contribute to our country's assets. The riches of the world do not all lie in mines or oil fields, nor yet in the safes of Banks, of Companies and of Trade Unions. Much of our wealth is supplied by men of vision who must often, lest they be prevented from giving their best, deposit their gold under men's pillows in the night-time.

The publication of these drawings is intended as an act of homage to those who give rather than take. If the result seems to warrant it I hope to continue the series. For the admirable text which accompanies the portraits I cannot be sufficiently grateful to my friends. I am proud to have had the co-operation of the wise and witty writers of the appreciatory notes; and my warm thanks—and the thanks of the readers—are due to H. Granville Barker, Max Beerbohm, Arnold Bennett, Laurence Binyon, A. Clutton-Brock, Francis M. Cornford, John Drinkwater, H.A.L. Fisher, A.H. Fox-Strangways, John Freeman, John Galsworthy, Eric Gill, Edmund Gosse, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Sir Henry Hadow, David Hogarth, Sir Joseph Larmor, Frederick Manning, Henry W. Nevinson, Sir Henry Newbolt, James Stevens, George Street and H. G. Wells.

August 1920 W.R.

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GRANVILLE BARKER

GRANVILLE BARKER

It is passing hard for a personal friend and keen admirer to write a page on Granville Barker which shall have that judicial detachment and discrimination so desirable in the valuer of other men's wares. However—!

Everybody knows his work for the stage; but few perhaps realize the extent to which his strong individuality cut across the stubborn shibboleths, and revitalized the stationary mechanism, of the British stage.

His work at the Court theatre was, frankly, a revolution; for in those four years, from 1903 to 1907, he formed a school of acting whose offshoots to this day provide the best miming in this island.

Granville Barker, first of moderns, made London realize that 'the play's the thing', and before him the 'stars' in their courses trembled and stood still. Many lesser lights who passed through his hands have become 'stars' since, yet none of these have quite forgotten that their places in the planetary system are not absolute but relative.

But it is rather of Granville Barker the dramatist, than of Granville Barker actor and producer, that one would speak. 'The Voysey Inheritance' has not been surpassed as a comedy of English manners in our time; nor 'The Marriage of Ann Leete' as an experiment in technique. As for 'Waste'—seldom was a play better named. Banned by the incredible censorship of that day, it never had a chance. It is not, perhaps, the great tragedy which William Archer thought it, but it is an extraordinarily interesting play. A little yarn of its first and only production comes into the mind. "The play strikes its sublimest note," wrote one of its critics, "when the hero, going out to commit suicide, utters the words: 'Leave it!'" Well, Granville Barker who wrote the play, produced the play, and played the hero, had, as he left the stage for death, descried a stage hand about to shut the wrong door. The sublime utterance 'Leave it!' was made to that stage hand.

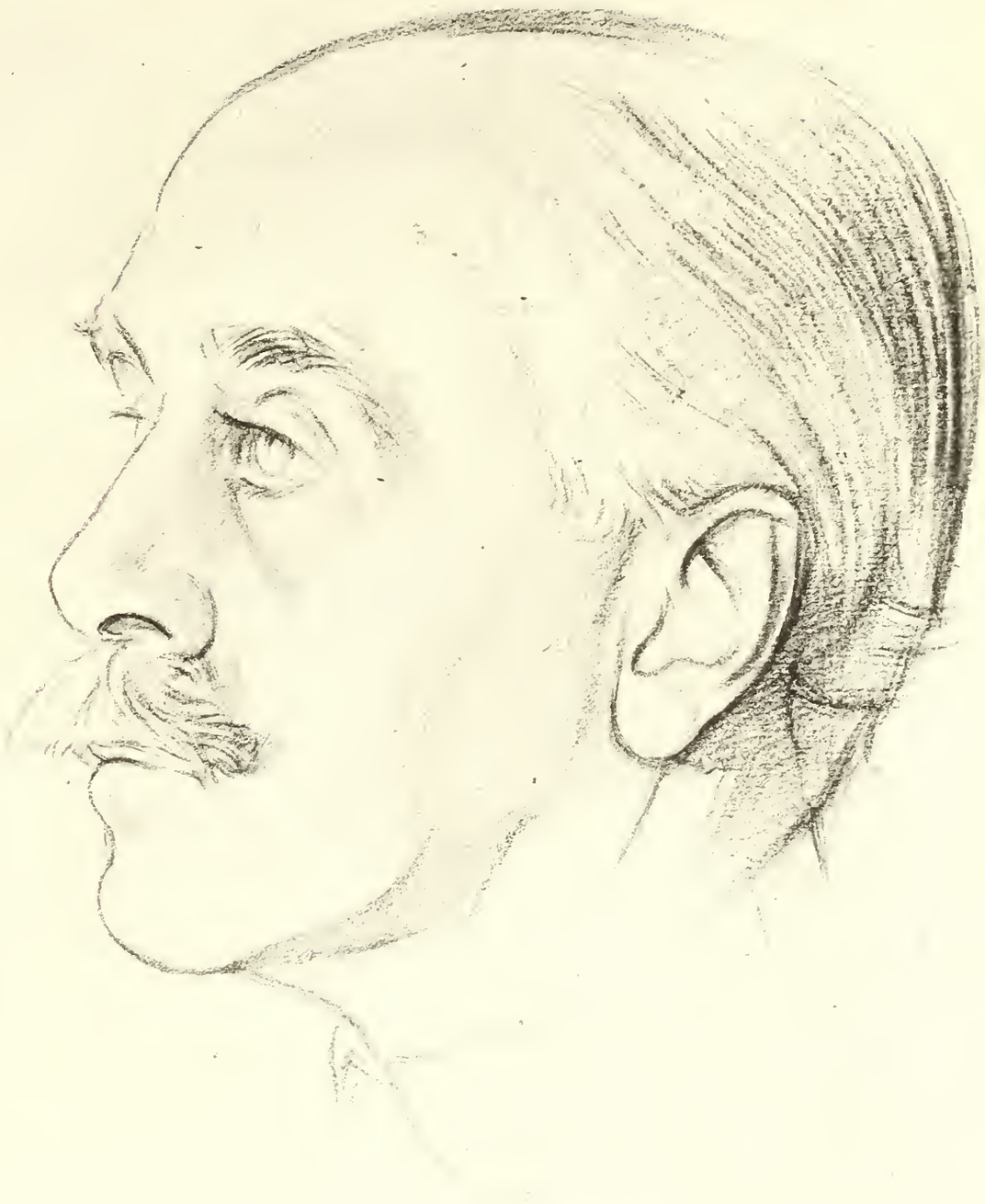
Just one word to end on—Loyalty. There never was a man who more loyally served the best interests of the drama in this country, than Granville Barker.

MAX BEERBOHM

MAX BEERBOHM

If a man were asked, given the wide range, if you will, of a movement, a force, a personality, a writer, to name the most completely distinguished fact in the England of our time, how happy would it be for his reputation with posterity if he had the wit to say, Max Beerbohm. Distinguished, like many other satisfactory words, is one that is overworked, but there is none that can be so perfectly applied to Mr. Beerbohm. Distinction with him is never oddity, or preciousness, or mere windy cleverness. His writing is so simple that every good phrase seems almost like a lucky accident; but the luck goes on always to the end of the chapter, and you finish reading with the consciousness of every phrase having been good right through. It would be safe to defy Mr. Beerbohm's most jealous critic to find an unsuccessful passage anywhere in his work. And this admirable sureness of detail means an underlying constructive power which, although Mr. Beerbohm uses it for delicate enough ends, is one of the major qualities of literary art. "Hilary Maltby and Stephen Braxton" is as compact a piece of craftsmanship as "Samson Agonistes," which, it may be pointed out, is not to affront Mr. Beerbohm by saying that he is as great a writer as Milton.

It is the same with his drawings. Wit is their apparent design, but (and especially in his later work) there is always the great sincerity of beauty. That, perhaps, is Mr. Beerbohm's secret; he has the wittiest mind of an age, but he is a serious artist.



ARNOLD BENNETT

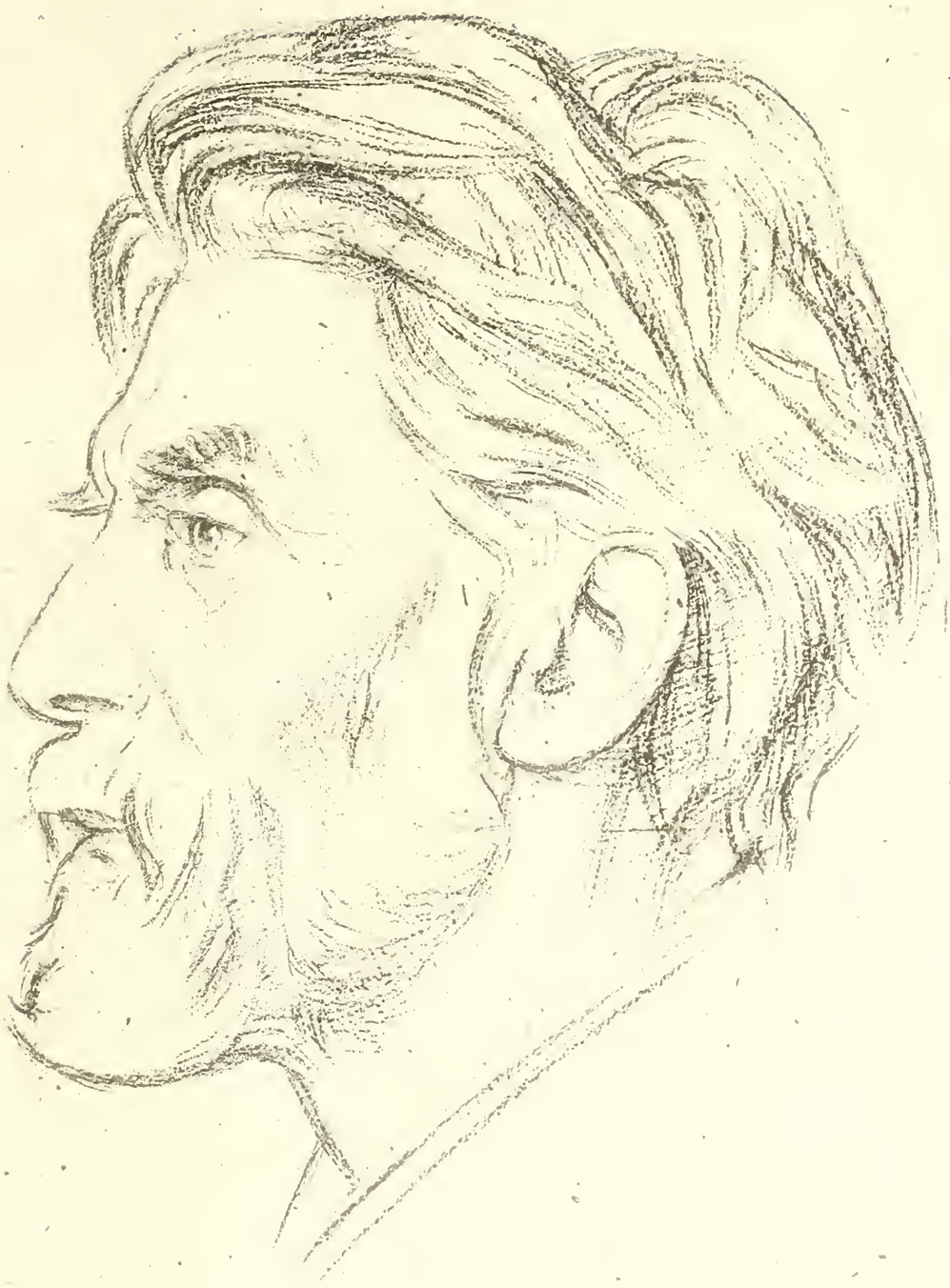
ARNOLD BENNETT

Seven cities were the birthplace of Homer, and Arnold Bennett was begotten by Five Towns. They are five various towns with an immense air of urgent practicality in the foreground of the most beautiful and strange coloured sunsets in the world. They present an aspect of flaring blast furnaces and smoky kilns to the superficial eye, they roar and hammer and clatter catastrophically — all except Newcastle which pretends to be genteel—and they send out the most delicate and translucent egg-shell china cups conceivable all over the earth. It was inevitable that the literary child of this quintuple parentage should blend something very hard and common with something very fine, and so it is that Arnold Bennett is a knowing Card among poets and dramatists and writing people and withal a very great and delicate creative artist indeed. The Five Towns have their commercial bleak daytime aspect and their hours of gigantic mystery at sundown and in the twilight. Bennett writes his *Sacred and Profane Love*, his *Theresa of Watling Street* and his little hand books of provincial *savoir faire*, and then amazes and subdues us with a *Clayhanger*, a *Matador of the Five Towns* or an *Old Wives' Tale*. These are his heights and depths, but also to be considered there are his humorous breadths. The greatness of Bennett shines out at times irregularly and uncertainly upon the world, but the humorous Bennett, with a fun that is all his own, smiles perpetually through whatever he writes, great things or little. Laughter like charity should begin at home, and the dearest entertainment of Arnold Bennett is Arnold Bennett. *A Great Man* and *The Card*, *Hugo* and *The Grand Babylon Hotel* are full of a delighted and delightful appreciation of the grandiose impulse he cherishes and confesses in his heart. He likes glitter, wealth, big smart things, success, applause, the brilliant shams of things theatrical and good advertisements, and he laughs at his liking. The genius and humour of Enoch Arnold Bennett have made him our leading novelist and one of our most successful playwrights, but if the Enoch could have got away from the Arnold, he would probably have made a brilliantly successful business man. But the Arnold is the master; Bennett has written greatly and he has written for fun and sometimes he has just written, but no one can say that he has ever written merely for money or sold his pen or betrayed the republic of letters for any commercial end.

ROBERT BRIDGES

ROBERT BRIDGES

It is just thirty years since the appearance of the Shorter Poems made known to a large public the exquisite lyric art of Robert Bridges. The poet was then no longer young; he had retired from the profession of medicine, and with a certain Miltonic haughtiness,— a disdain of the fevers and competitions of literary life as it is lived in London,— pursued his chosen art in the pleasant seclusion of a Berkshire village. Before 1890 his poems, privately printed for the most part, had been known to few. Though not acclaimed and trumpeted by the Press, the Shorter Poems won from the first a sure success; and the influence of this book of lyrics, and of its successors, has been all the more profound because not obvious on the surface. Never before was the English country, the colour, the scents and sounds of it, so truly felt and intimately pictured; and on the side of rhythmical art the book reached out to a novel and unsuspected range of music in English verse. It opened the ears of a new generation: and, consciously or unconsciously, scarcely one of the young poets of to-day is unaffected by that liberating example. When the Poet Laureateship fell vacant, the appointment of Robert Bridges was a surprise to the many; the few rejoiced that the public laurel should be worn by one who was not only a thorough and distinguished master of his chosen style but a bold and fruitful innovator. Learned in his art, Mr. Bridges is no respecter of traditions for their own sake. None has been more generous with encouragement for his juniors, more quick to seek out new talent. A famous athlete in his youth, he wears his years well. The youth of Oxford who climb Boar's Hill to seek his conversation do not sit solemn at the feet of a conventional sage, whose every commonplace is translated into an oracle: they find a man, splendid in stature, lean and leonine, ready to talk and ready to listen, paradoxical, challenging, with flashes of fun, whimsical brusqueness, confident enthusiasm for his latest scheme or for old music; and behind all an impression of deep tenderness of nature combined with a rather indolent strength and loftiness makes one understand the more how the delicacy of the poems is the delicacy only possible to power.



A. CLUTTON-BROCK

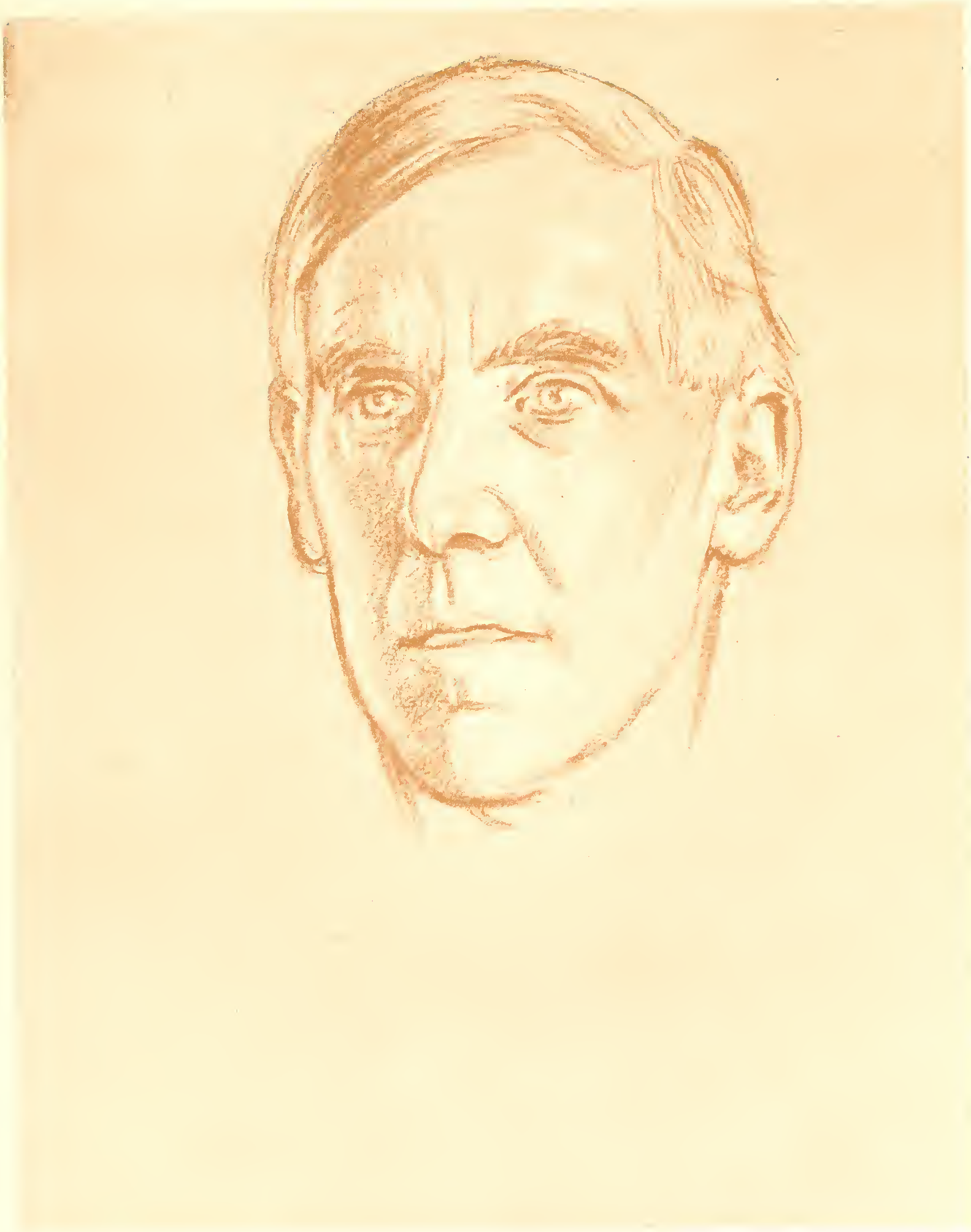
MR. A. CLUTTON-BROCK

Mr. Brock could prove anything. Mercifully, he chooses only those things which are worth proving upon which to show this skill. Under his pilotage we sail on smooth seas beyond the Charybdis of the particular instance and the Scylla of a generalisation. The trouble begins when we try to reconstruct his argument with a view to convincing others and find our weak hands grasping a bow of Ulysses.

It may happen you are staying somewhere among the Surrey ponds and commons and, after paying homage at the Watts gallery, are taken a little further on to visit Mr. Brock. You are received in the garden he knows and loves and presently enter Tobacco-Parliament House itself. When the evening sitting begins it is seen at once that no notice is required of any question, that every topic is welcome and all are debatable, that there are as many parties as there are chairs, and that you have to fight for your life on some issue that you have been rash enough to raise. In a corner, sewing, sits the Speaker, but she seldom speaks; and this is well for the argument, for when she has spoken there is usually little to add.

Mr. Brock is a polyglot. He talks pictures or poems, music or morals with so slight an accent that we find ourselves wondering which of them is his native tongue—the vocabulary, indeed, not equal but the fluency coeternal. And when instead of listening to his words we read them, they do not read like a translation. It is not this language or that but language as such that he uses, and in his style many-coloured idiom is lost in the white light of expression.

Philosophies are often panaceas — we think of Hegel's positivised negative, of Schopenhauer's creative pessimism. In Mr. Brock's view of the truth of things there is no one cure for all ills. He does not vaguely refer everything to the humours, nor precisely pin his faith to phlebotomy or cautery. He writes a *Treasure of Poore Men, being a Booke of very good Medicines,* where instead of "the Vertues of theis Hearbs" he speaks quietly of "the Christian Values". The world has always need of such herbals.

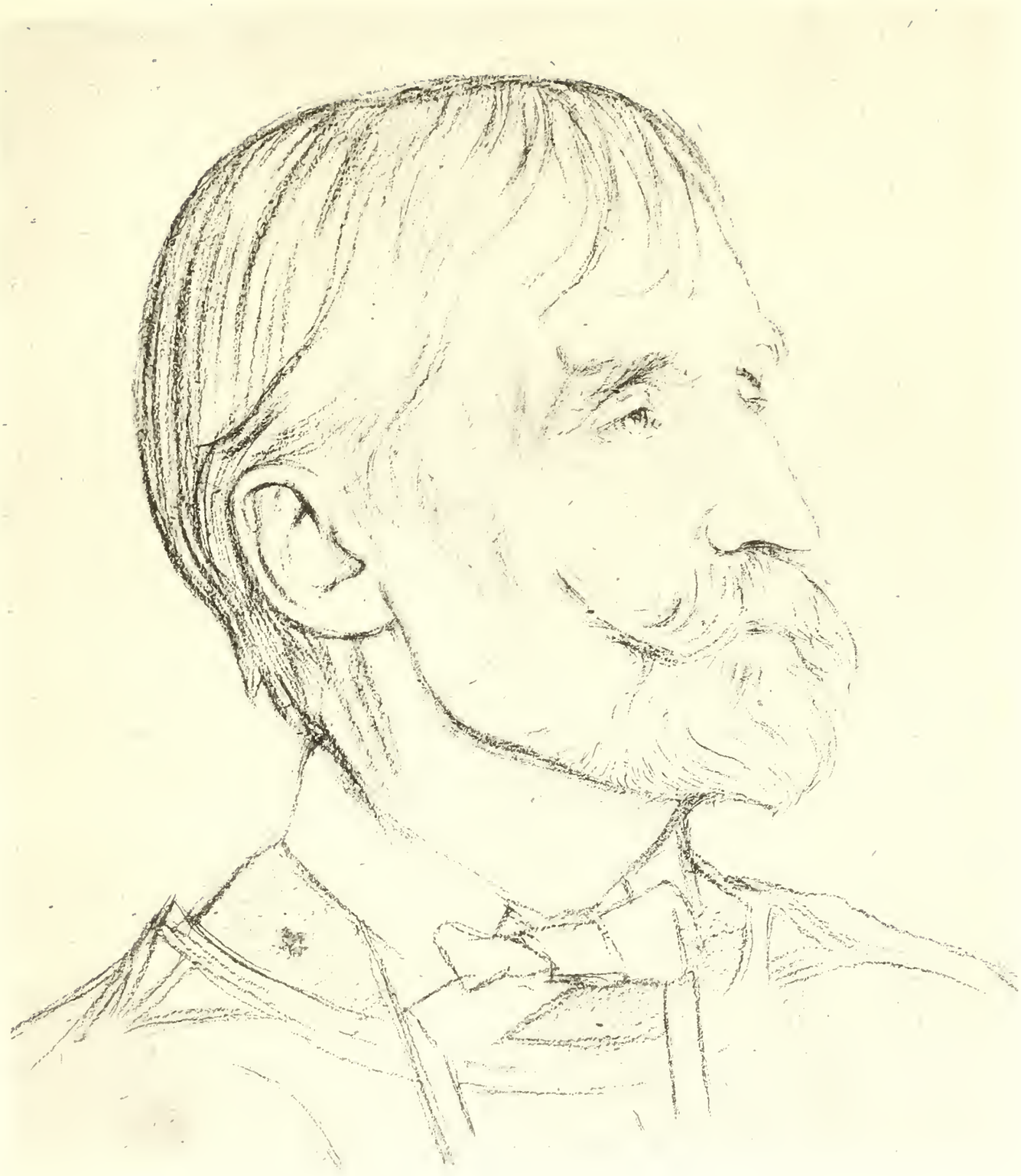


T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON

T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON

Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson, born at Alnwick in 1840, is almost the last survivor of the group of whom William Morris was the most famous. But, unlike that great man, Mr. Cobden-Sanderson is primarily a man of religion, and if his religion is chiefly a thing of his own invention that is a thing for which the Christian minority no less than the Agnostic majority is partly to be blamed. The religion of the churches is from the point of view of the outsider a dead mediaevalism. The agnosticism of the crowd is an impotent laisser faire. Money and the making of money is the spur to action to-day. Material convenience and enrichment are the modern man's ambitions. Against these things Morris fought, and with him Cobden-Sanderson, and they attempted by personal handiwork to show that useful things could be not only beautiful but the source of beautiful life. By propaganda they sought to create a movement of revolt against the commercialism of the modern world and a return to the mediaeval conception of good workmanship and good society.

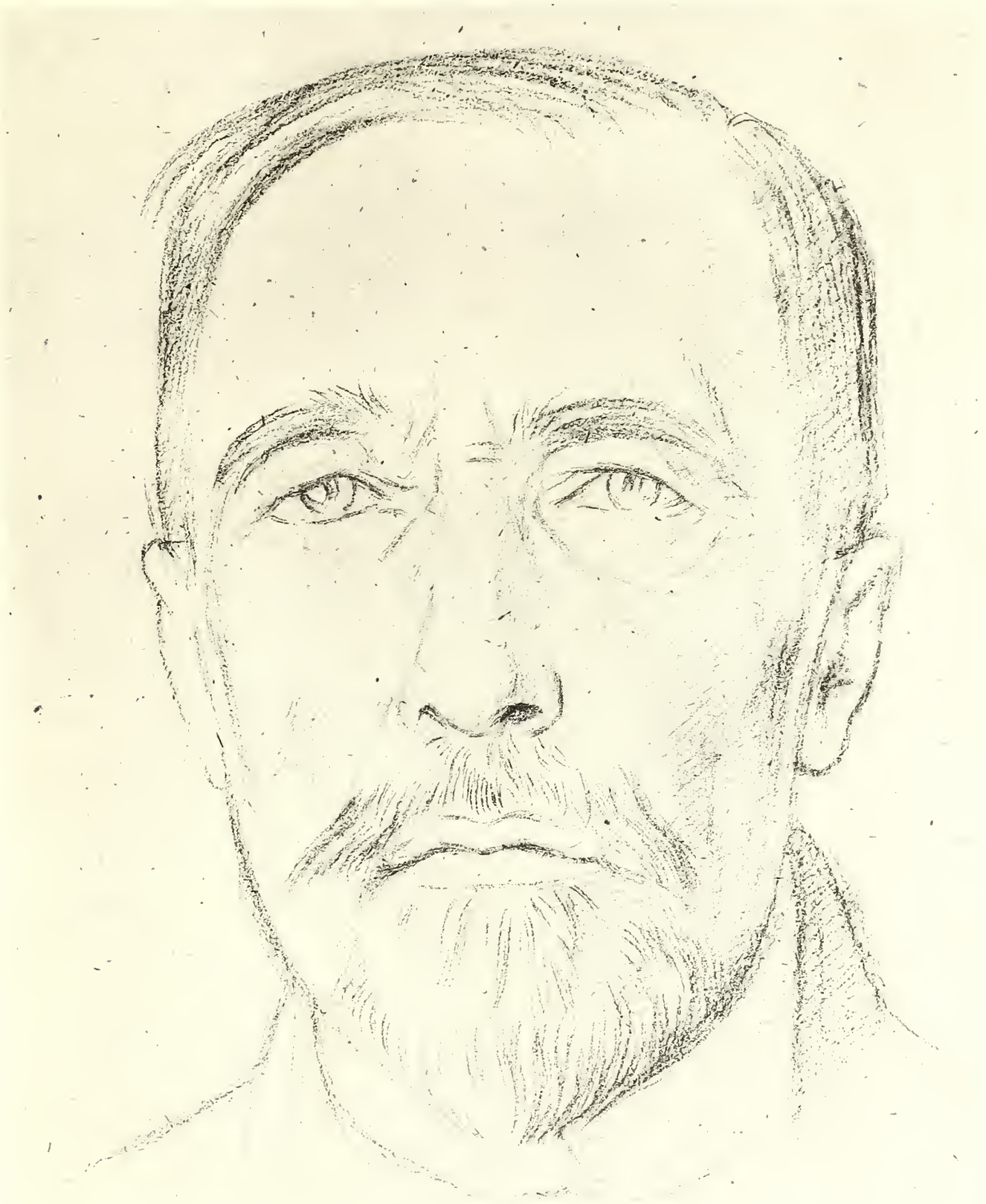
Mr. Cobden-Sanderson as workman, as printer and bookbinder, has done what few have attempted. He has sought for himself a vision of God and given his vision noble and holy utterance in the printed word. Let us praise "men rich in virtue, studying beautifulness; living in peace in their houses."



JOSEPH CONRAD

JOSEPH CONRAD

It is said that no human being is more solitary than a ship-captain. Joseph Conrad held the august and withdrawn situation of a ship-captain, in the British Merchant Service, for a number of years. He has now been an author, before the public, for just a quarter of a century; but the habit of solitude, reinforced continually by a reserved and sensitive temperament, has so clung to him that his personality is scarcely better known to-day than when he published his first book, "Almayer's Folly", in 1895. The few people of his second vocation who meet him know that he is as distinguished, elusive, and romantic as the finest of his own heroes; and, save exceeding few among them, they know no more. His portrait is a rare and a misleading apparition in the papers. His name hides a more formidable one. The language which he uses is not the language which he spoke as a youth; nor is it quite the idiom of an Englishman. In his earlier works are to be found many exotic turns of phrase, and some which cannot be strictly defined as English. He has gradually perfected the instrument which he selected for himself, and to-day his luxurious prose, while no Englishman could write it, is unassailable by purists and professors. Even his magnificent partiality for the adjective, which he dangerously lifted to a level hitherto unknown in Britain, has been chastened in obedience to the genius of the tongue. His handling of English must count with the historic miracles of the craft of letters; but this miracle of slowly acquired virtuosity is forgotten in the intrinsic splendour of the work itself. He does not merely write in the grand manner,—he conceives and imagines in the grand manner. So much so that the astounding vehicle of the work sinks to secondary importance. His character and his plots are heroic. His ruthless realism is romantic. He sees man and the earth grandly. He does not want to alter human nature—he loves it.



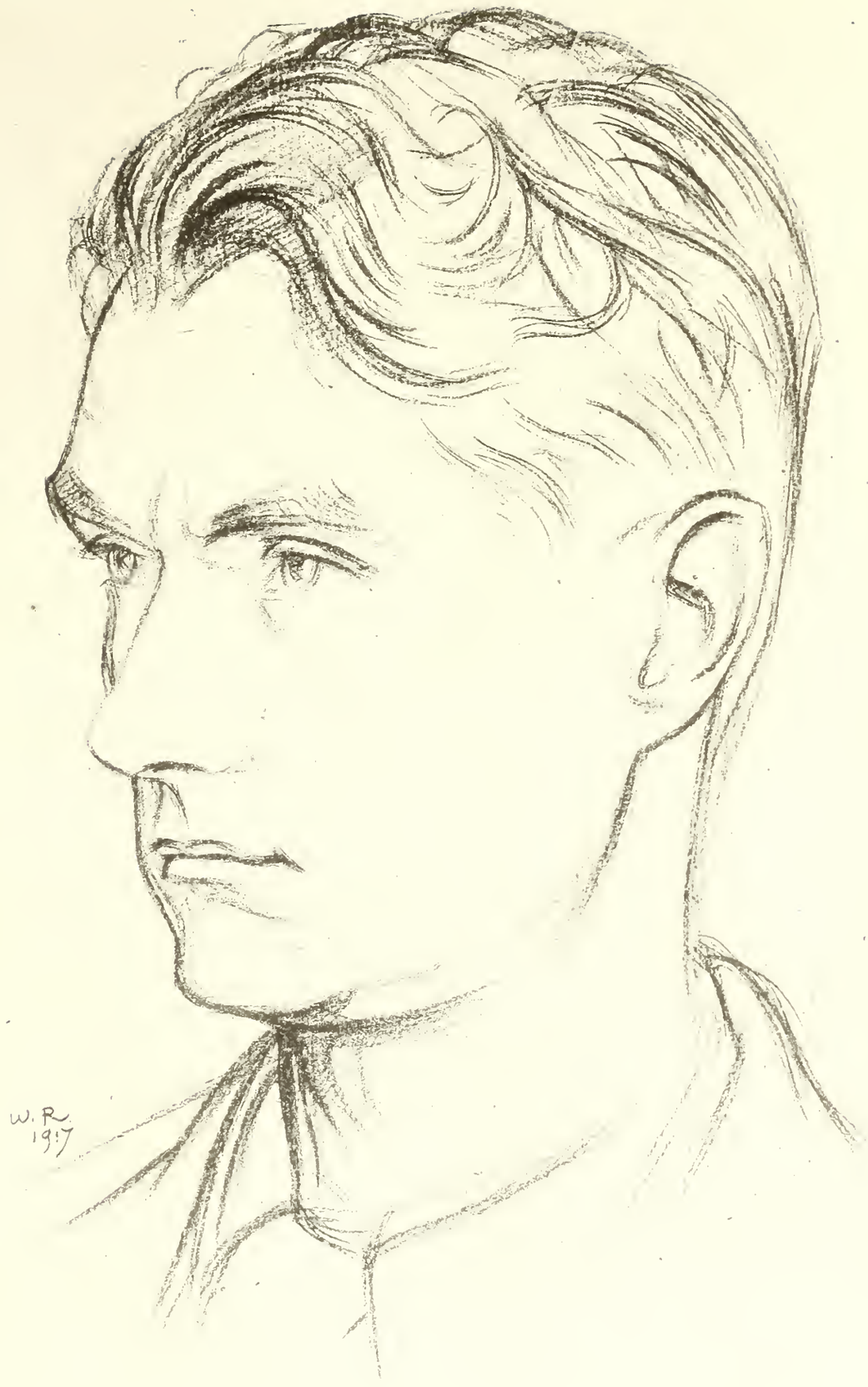
JOHN DRINKWATER

JOHN DRINKWATER

In an age of fierce competition, when even very loud voices, roaring out in the market-place things very new and strange, are hardly audible through the din of innumerable other loud voices raised not less high in delivery of messages equally startling, what chance is there for a man who stands apart and utters in a level tone things that are not at all eccentric? It would seem that there is a fair chance. Old things that are good do not lose their freshness; and brand-new things may for aught we know turn stale at any moment; and not everybody wants to be deafened all the time. Neither as poet nor as critic has Mr. Drinkwater lacked recognition, though as critic he has never sought to prove that the previous critics were all wrong, and as poet has never bullied his Muse into inspiring him with unheard-of notions and unrecognisable forms. He seems to be less preoccupied with his attitude towards life and art than with the joy of contemplating and feeling what is good in them. Altogether, a restful person, sunny, benign, modest, whom one can more easily imagine strolling about the Cotswolds of his adoption and at nightfall writing a lyric about them, and then climbing, candle in hand,

> The little whitewashed stair
> Above the lavender,

than one can imagine him waking up next morning to find himself famous throughout the United States of America. Such fame has, however, befallen him. The land in which Abraham Lincoln is an almost sacrosanct figure seems to have embraced whole-heartedly Mr. Drinkwater's presentment of him. Could any dramatist have a better testimonial to his power of historic sympathy and insight — of rising to the level of a great theme? Quite apart from that, the success of the play in England had been a welcome proof that drama can after all be thoroughly "theatrical," in the right sense, without the painful tightness of form which has frightened away from the theatre so many potential dramatists. Young men will write plays now who would not have dared but for the happy lesson taught them by Mr. Drinkwater. But we do not, of course, promise that their plays will be so good as those for which we look to that happy teacher.


W. R
1917

SIR EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.

SIR EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.

The biography of every great artist is a history of the interaction between temperament and experience: between the natural endowment which is the content of genius and the training, whether of the schools or of the world, which gives it form and experience. In the career of Elgar this interaction has been singularly close and harmonious. His natural endowment is a keen sense of beauty of tone, an imagination vivid and poignant rather than wide of range, a special gift of pathos and tenderness, and above all a sheer intellectual power which might equally well have made him a great scientist, or a great man of letters. It is no coincidence, it is still less a pose, that he takes far more interest in discussing a chemical problem or extricating a seventeenth-century dramatist than in any question concerning this technique of his own art. 'I like music' he once said 'but I do not in the least care to know how it is made,' and he is probably to this day unconscious of the extent to which in his recent character music he has superseded the old classical form. Of direct musical training he had little or none. Schumann learned most of his counterpoint from Jean Paul: Elgar's composition owes less to the music teacher than to the collections of old English authors which he found in an attic at home and devoured through every spare moment of his boyhood. His astonishing gift of orchestration was trained not in any school but in amateur bands when he had the inestimable advantage of testing each experiment as he made it, and the result is a mastery of instrumental dialogue, which, had he nothing else, would give him rank among the great artists of the world. And he has much else. Of his limitations which are plain and obvious, there is no need here to speak—criticism has too often deserved its definition as the art of complaining about something because it is not something else—and Elgar has given so much that it would be ungrateful to discuss what he has withheld. A master of the grave and elegiac mood in music, a colourist whose richness of tone is reinforced by the full texture of his polyphony, he is above all conspicuous for the variety and interest of his musical structure. In the Malvern Variations, in the Concert Overture, in Falstaff, in the slow movement of the first symphony and the whole of the second; in the violin concerto, in the pianoforte quintet he has taken his place among the great composers and has written work which bids fair to live so long as the Art endures.

W. Rothenstein
1919

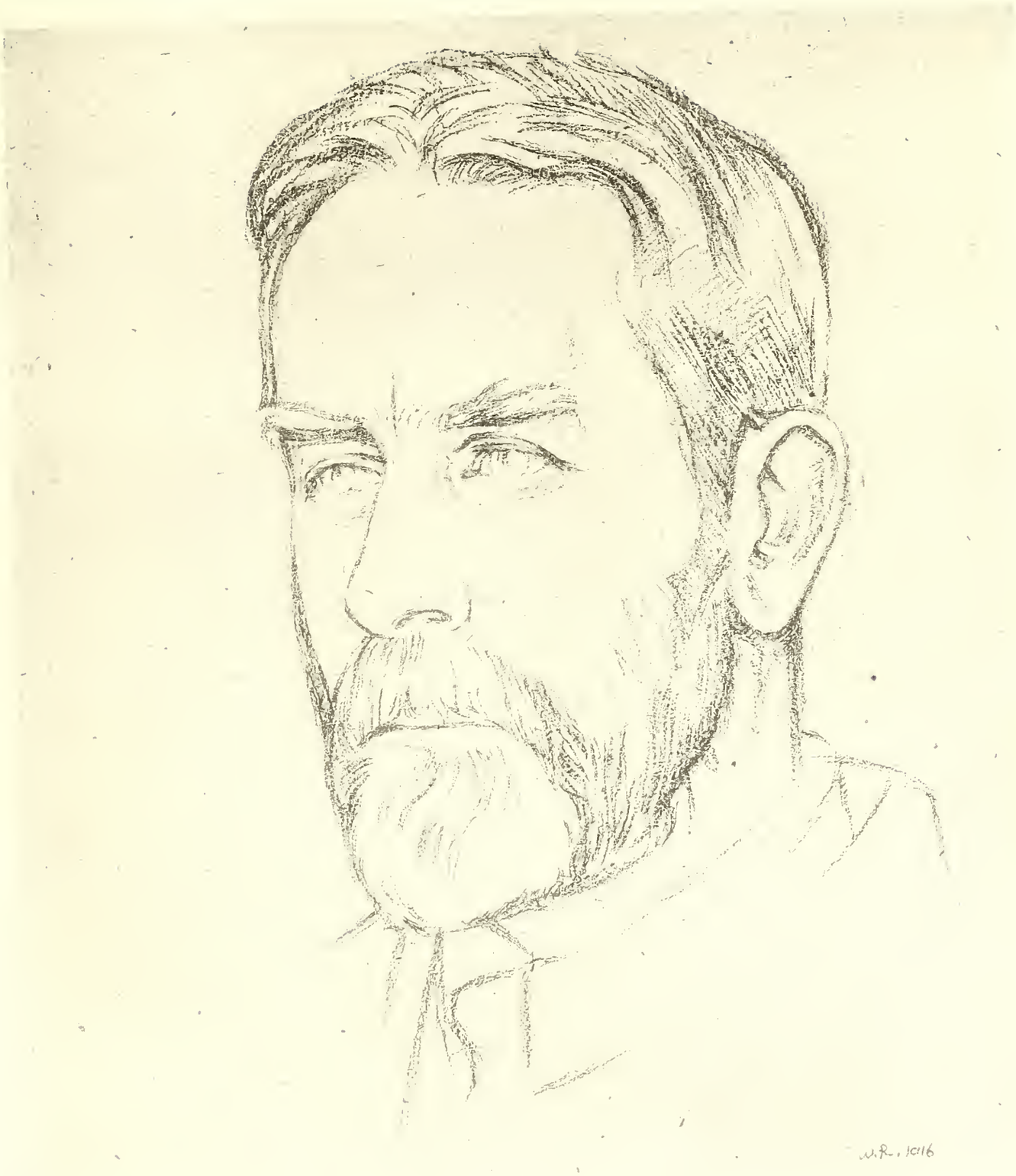
SIR JAMES FRAZER

SIR JAMES FRAZER

"The windows of my study look on the tranquil court of an ancient college, where the sundial marks the silent passage of the hours, and in the long summer days the fountain splashes drowsily amid flowers and grass; where, as the evening shadows deepen, the lights come out in the blazoned windows of the Elizabethan hall and from the chapel the sweet voices of the choir, blent with the pealing music of the organ, float on the peaceful air, telling of man's eternal aspirations after truth and goodness and immortality. Here, if anywhere, remote from the tumult and bustle of the world with its pomps and vanities and ambitions, the student may hope to hear the still voice of truth, to penetrate through the little transitory questions of the hour to the realities which abide, or rather which we fondly think must abide, while the generations come and go."

These words, taken from the preface to Sir James Frazer's great commentary on the Greek traveller, Pausanias, disclose the motive and the inspiration of a life given to patient labour in the field of comparative religion and anthropology. Taking as his point of departure the mysterious priest of the sacred oak-tree on the shore of Diana's Mirror at Nemi, the author of the *Golden Bough* follows, through intricate deviations where the grotesque horror of savagery is sometimes transfigured by tragic beauty, sometimes transformed to the innocent mummery of country sports, the pattern of that fatal web "woven of three different threads — the black thread of magic, the red thread of religion, and the white thread of science." No one who has watched this grim and fantastic procession of medicine-men, of priests and magicians, of dying kings and dying Gods, the rulers, deluders, and saviours of mankind, can ever again look with same eyes upon the attempts of magic, religion, and philosophy to read in the features of Nature the expression of a spirit responsive to the spirit of man.

A younger generation has already entered into these labours. It is the scholar's reward to know that, if he has sought truth faithfully, he has kindled a light from which other and yet other lamps will take fire long after his own shall have been extinguished.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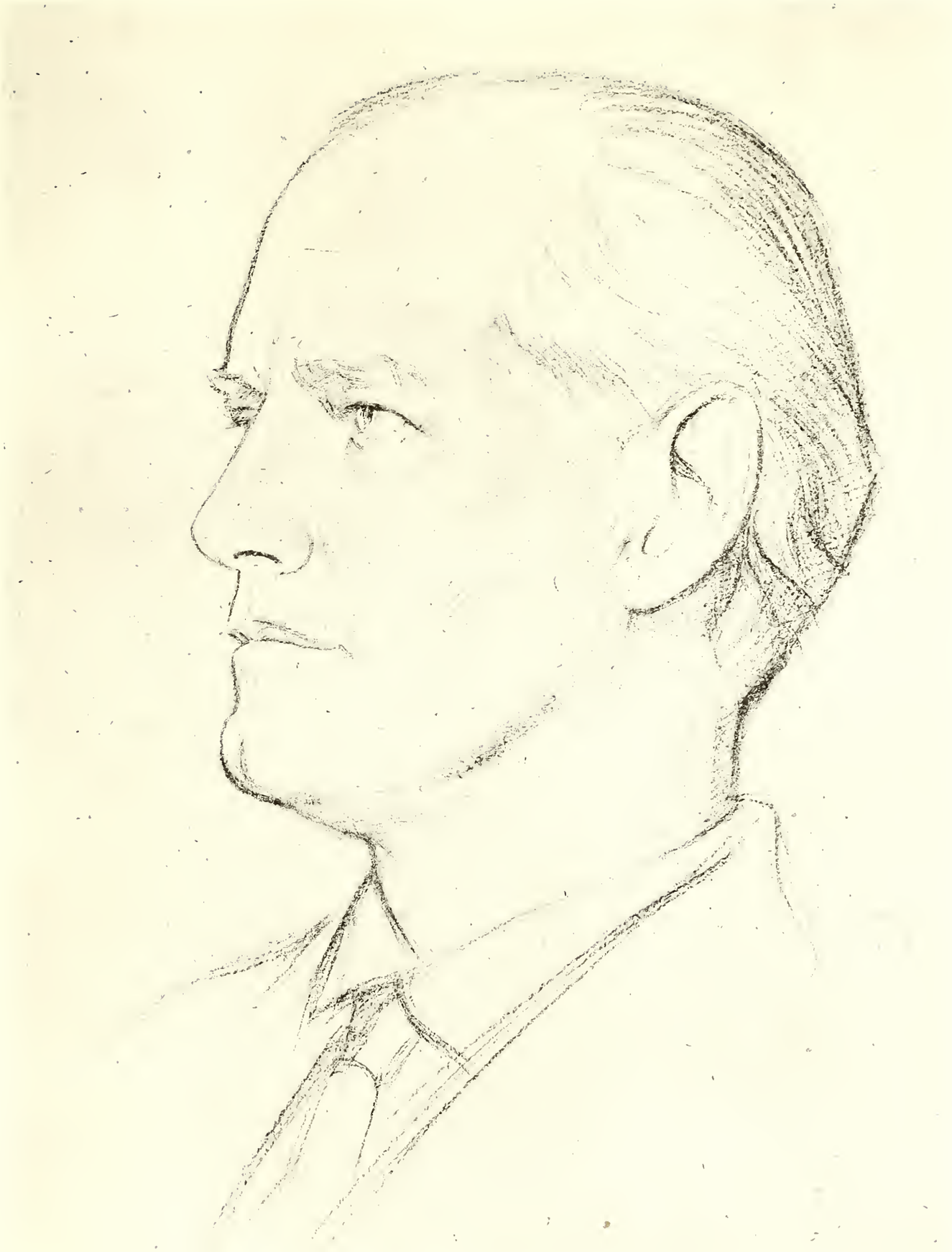
JOHN GALSWORTHY

If you look at his face, you perceive at once the high English breeding, with its sense of balance and fairplay; the intellectual quality that some contrive to retain or even acquire at a public school and Oxford; the profound emotion industriously restrained and never allowed public expression; and a sensitiveness almost excessive to the pain, especially the physical pain, of men, women, and animals. The face is the man no less than the style. And by style is meant, not merely the choice of words and the arrangement of sentences, but a particular aspect of the world, a way of looking at things, the choice of this sudject or that.

All these fine characteristics are shown in the long series of dramas and novels which Galsworthy has produced during the last twenty years or so. One need hardly separate the instances, but perhaps the balance and fairplay are especially obvious in "The Silver Box," "The Eldest Son," "Strife," and "The Skin Game" among the dramas, and in "Fraternity," "The Freelands," and "Saint's Progress" among the novels; the restrained emotion especially in "The Country House," "The Patrician," and "The Dark Flower." The intellectual quality is too pervasive for distinct illustration, and so is the extreme sensitiveness to the pain of others. But one may say that no one except a writer educated at an English public school and university could possibly have written "The Man of Property," "The Country House," "The Patrician," or "Saint's Progress," for they reveal the very heart of the highly educated, upper-middle class to which such a man almost invariably belongs. And as to sensitive sympathy with the pains and sorrows of the world, think of the prison scenes in "Justice" or the final act of "The Fugitive!" But think also of the charming satire with which the dramatist laughs at his own sensitiveness in that exquisite play called "The Pigeon."

Stuffy critics may complain that Galsworthy has the defects of all these great qualities. They may say that intellect and balance and the restraint of emotion keep him cold. They may say his over-sensitiveness betrays him into sentiment. Never mind! He possesses those great qualities, defects or not, and they have combined to make in him an English dramatist, novelist, and essayist of a singularly noble and distinctive style. To him as much as to any living writer our literature owes the preservation of its dignity and thoughtfulness.

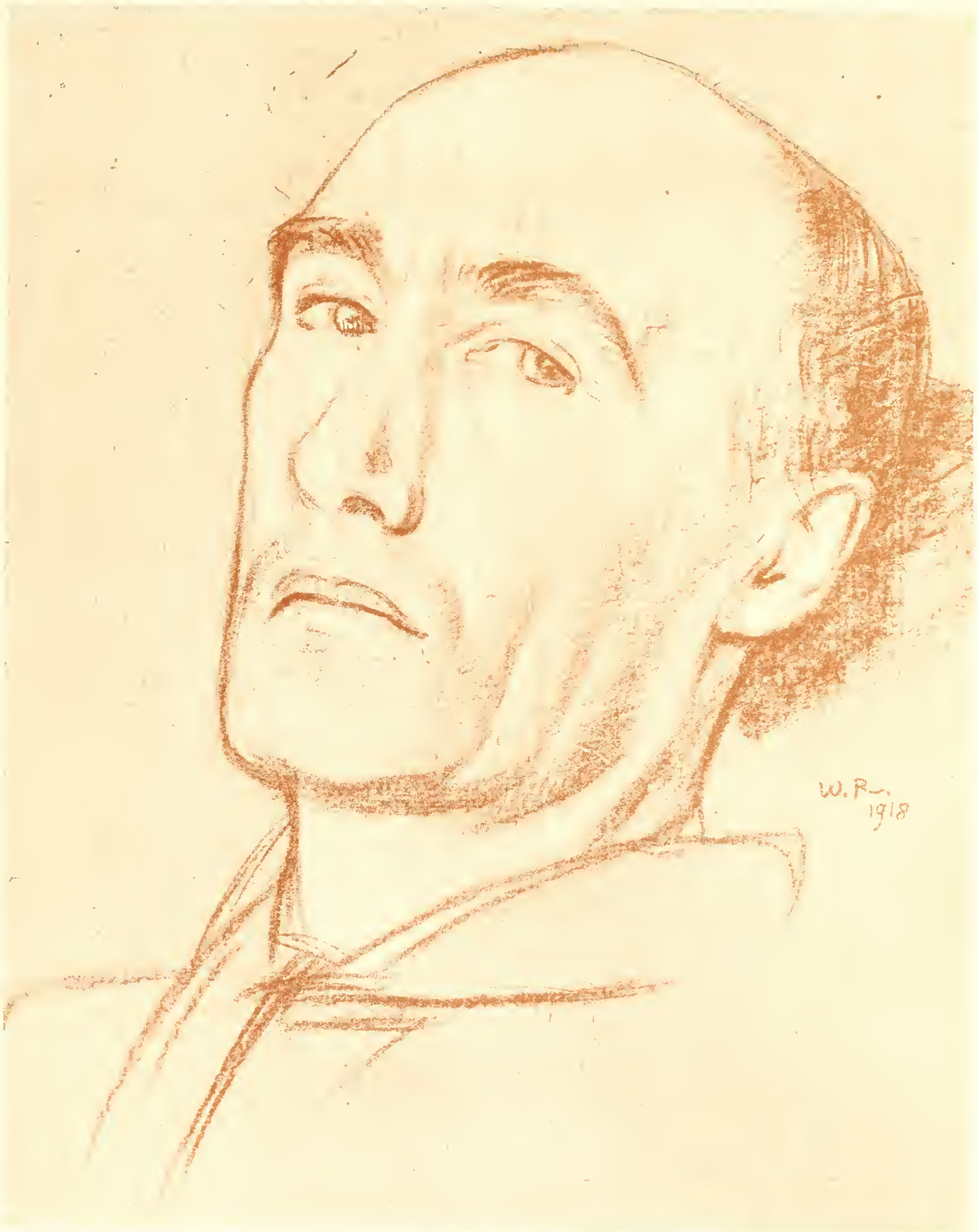


M. ANDRÉ GIDE

M. ANDRÉ GIDE

Most resolutely individualist of all recent writers in the French language, M. André Gide seems predisposed to appreciate England and to be weclomed by English readers. For the author of "La Porte Etroite," Puritanism can offer no obscurity; "Paludes" is a work of humour as pure as that of Sterne or Max Beerbohm; the bonds of Latin logic are nowhere more fantastically twisted than in "Les Caves du Vatican," nowhere more arrogantly broken than in "L'Immoraliste."

The genius of M. Gide is dark and lustrous, like a pool in the forest; sometimes the wind catches its surface as in " Pretextes", sometimes the twilight broods over its mystery, as in "Isabelle". Intelligent, delicate and weary, M. Gide is barely saved, by his exquisite instinct of expression, from being a mere spectator of life. The beautiful qualities of his soul, his pity, his tenderness, his frugal and unfettered clairvoyance arm him for contemplation rather than for action. He gives the reader an impression of writing because his talent tells him that he must, but all the while preferring silence and the fantastic pleasures of reverie.

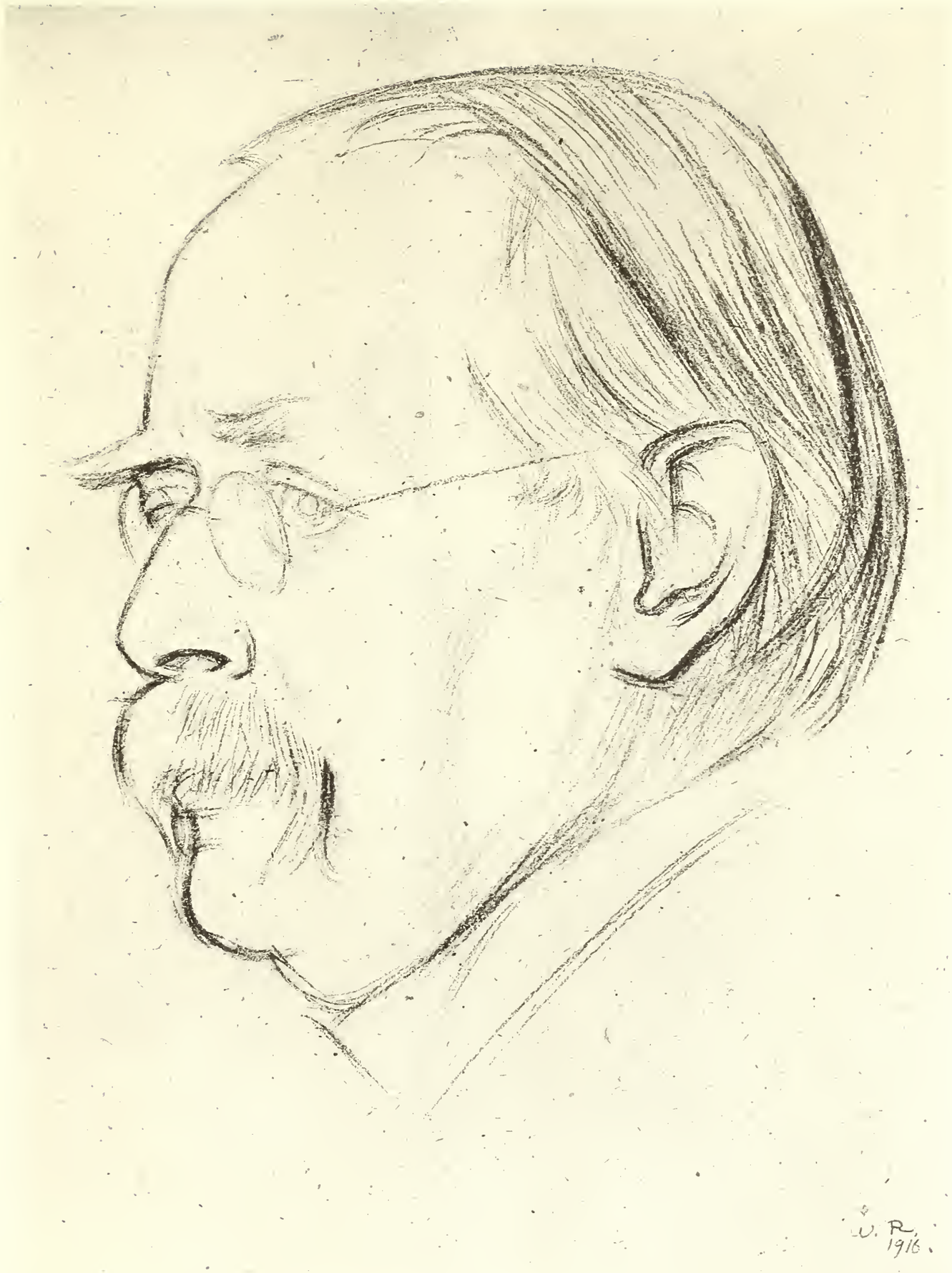

W. R.
1918

EDMUND GOSSE

MR. EDMUND GOSSE

There are writers who by sheer ingenuity of mind can make any subject entertaining, who do in fact find one subject as entertaining as another; they are the excursionists of literature, ready to make brief abstracts of the Nile, bi-metallism, or the Campden Wonder indifferently; taking colour, not giving it, the journalists *in excelsis*. Far rarer is the writer who from the vantage of his own personality can cover an immense range of subject and achieve unity above all his variety; the true Man of Letters. In this kind no one living excels Mr. Gosse, nor is it easy to think of anyone who can be said to approach him. To have written the best autobiographical fiction of a generation, (to rank with 'The Way of All Flesh'), half a dozen volumes of critical essays that must have won the admiration of Lamb or Dr. Johnson, certainly one and possibly three biographies of the highest order, to have contributed largely to the proper editing of English Poetry and to have struck his own individual note in verse, to have impressed fine scholarship upon the occasional column, this is a reckoning hardly to be matched. But in his ability to inform all these enterprises alike with the clear tones of his own personal quality Mr. Gosse raises accomplishment to the point of genius.

There was lately an absurd memorial to Mr. Gosse. Absurd, not because of the homage it paid, for none could have been given more fitly, not because it lacked authority, for a more representative array of talent can rarely have gathered to such a purpose. It was absurd because of its occasion, which purported to be Mr. Gosse's arrival at the age of seventy. It is unlikely that any of the signatories consulted the registers, and the truth doubtless is that Mr. Gosse slyly hoaxed his contemporaries, to see what they thought of him. He should be satisfied; for affection was never declared more cordially. But no one who knows him supposes that he is seventy; it merely was not polite to contradict. The only venerable thing about him is the entire generosity with which he gives himself to the cause of younger writers. But when some of these are really growing old, Mr. Gosse, while he will be encouraging them with generous praise, will as surely still be instructing them by his example.


W. R.
1916

LORD HALDANE, O.M.

LORD HALDANE, O.M.

Though a Scottish lawyer with a gift for metaphysics is not one of the rarer manifestations of the Divine Energy Lord Haldane transcends the ordinary computations even of Scottish competence in these fields of excellence. He can think harder, work longer hours, interest himself in more subjects, talk at greater length on a greater number of themes than other men even of his laborious and efficient stock. In him capacity and copiousness are carried almost to the point of genius. He does not sparkle in epigrams and phrases. His name does not stand for romance or poetry. He has added no page to the finest literature of our race, but few men in the sphere of practical life have held so close to great ideas or have rendered more important service to their country.

The grand virtue of Lord Haldane is that in a life of prodigious business he has never lost faith in ideas. The Labour men trust him. They see something massive and large in his turn-out and they think that his mind reaches out to the future. In his own profession of the law he rose to the highest pinnacle and earned golden opinions for the solidity and sublety of his legal accomplishments. His greatest triumphs known were gained neither in the law courts nor in Parliament nor in the study or lecture room, thongh in each of these widely differing fields he has won laurels, but at the War Office. His work here is acknowledged by the soldiers who know and count as of incomparable importance. He made the General Staff, the Officers' Training Corps, the Expeditionary Force, the Territorial Army.

It was a thousand pities that popular prejudice, inflamed by unscrupulous journalism, prevented his employment at the War Office in the opening stages of the Great War. His ability and experience would have saved us from many mistakes.

In abundance of individual vitality this burly and genial idealist resembles Gladstone and it is difficult to recall the name of a statesman, deficient in the higher oratorical and Parliamentary gifts, who by sheer force of intellect and character has wielded so large an influence or emerged from a cloud of detration with so little which the future historian will think fit to reprehend.

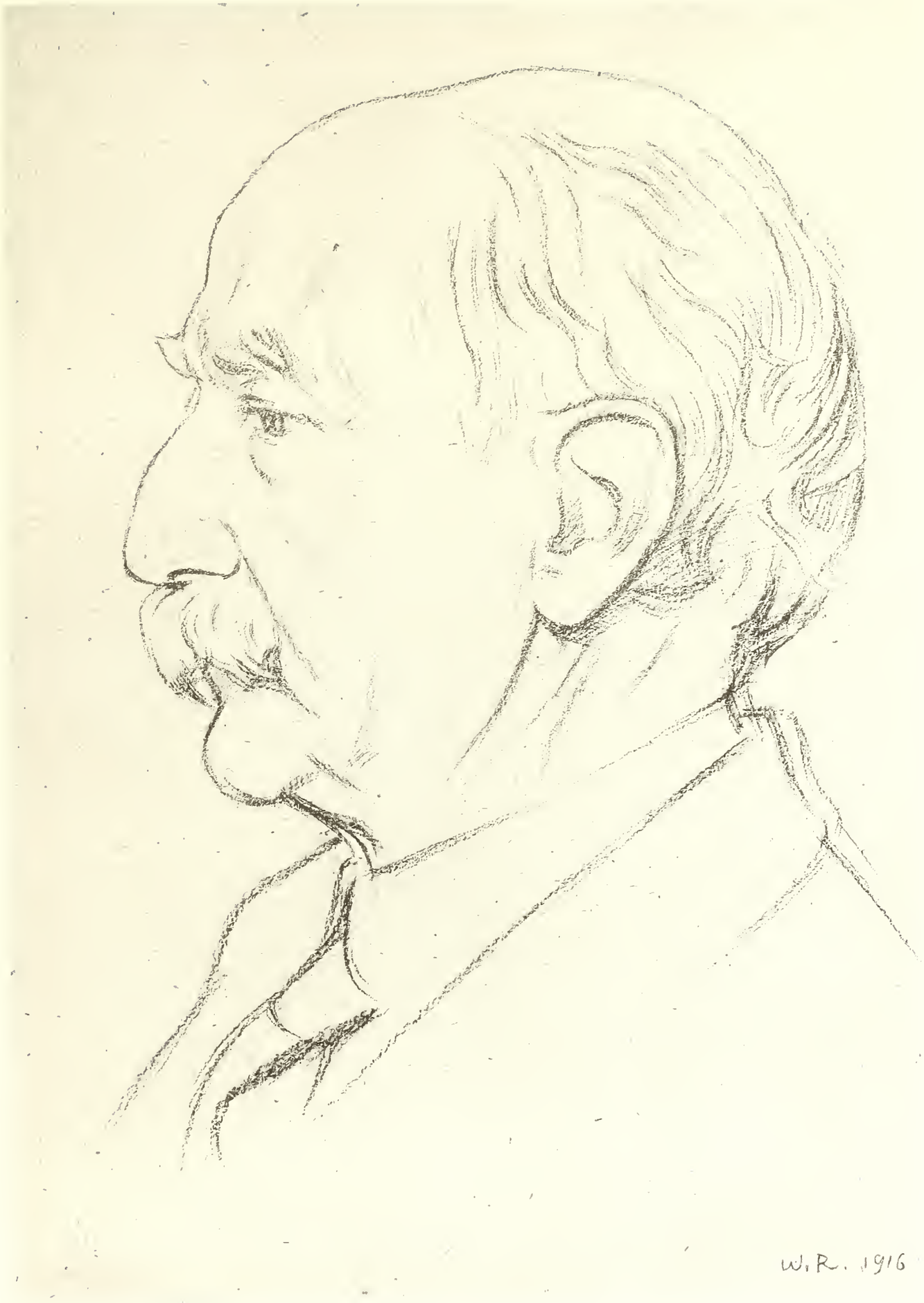
THOMAS HARDY, O.M.

THOMAS HARDY, O.M.

It is usual to classify Thomas Hardy as a novelist who has also written verse. The truth is that he is a poet throughout. He began with verse: but soon found the lyric form too limited for him. He was by nature not only Singer but Storyteller, Philosopher, and Patriot. It was the Philosopher who first needed expression: and his view of human life was not one to be easily presented in the chance lights and reflections of small disconnected poems, for it was deep and far-reaching. The genius of narrative too demanded greater range of style than verse could easily give. Hardy turned therefore from his lyrics and ballads to the vast series of his prose stories.

In these he developed the philosophy of his early poems—a philosophy built up under the influence of the Greek and the Shakespearian tragedies, and based on a sense of the conflict between the eternal forces ruling human life—the conflict of desires and possibilities. The Powers are too strong for Man: they bring him in typical cases to disaster, complete and even sordid. Moreover, in their action there is no sense discernible. Herein lies the tragedy of life as Hardy sees it: and it darkens his view of national as well as of individual history—the great epic drama of the Dynasts and the poignant later poems are full of it.

Throughout his creative work Hardy is sympathetic and humane: his essential goodness almost obscures his greatness. For range of vision and grasp of life he stands with Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Browning: but his humility, his self-criticism, his power of observing human weakness without condemning it, his love of the suffering rather than the strong, caused a temporary occultation of his genius. His attitude was resented as that of a pessimist, a traducer of God and Man, and especially of God. Truly he is not "on the side of the Angels"—when he looks at life he does not see Angels—but he has always been against the Devils, the Wrongers, personal and impersonal, human or superhuman. He is the lover and champion of Man. Lastly, he is in every fibre a true representative of the peculiar spirit of his countrymen—one of the small company of great poets who will carry the fame of England into a distant future.


W. R. 1916

A. E. HOUSMAN

A. E. HOUSMAN

A.E. Housman is a poet in the English tradition. Calling his solitary book of lyrics *A Shropshire Lad*, he takes the reader back to a time when poetry was not merely or mainly metropolitan and each county knew creative pride. He uses the simplest English forms, writing new ballads that wear the grimness of the old; and he uses the simplest English themes, turning to days when the ploughman naturally loved a scarlet coat and, breaking the laws, was hanged for it without philosophically reviling the laws. His briefest verses have uncommon energy; they are a man's poetry and quicken the hearts of common men. It is a poetry which moves in the changeful waters of our time like a swimmer conscious of his strength and careless of all else. The best of the lyrics—few are below the best—have each this athletic power, a masculine curtness and full pride of life.

There is something else, something which only individual genius can impress upon the traditional forms and expand them with a more than mortal beauty. He looks at a man dying young:

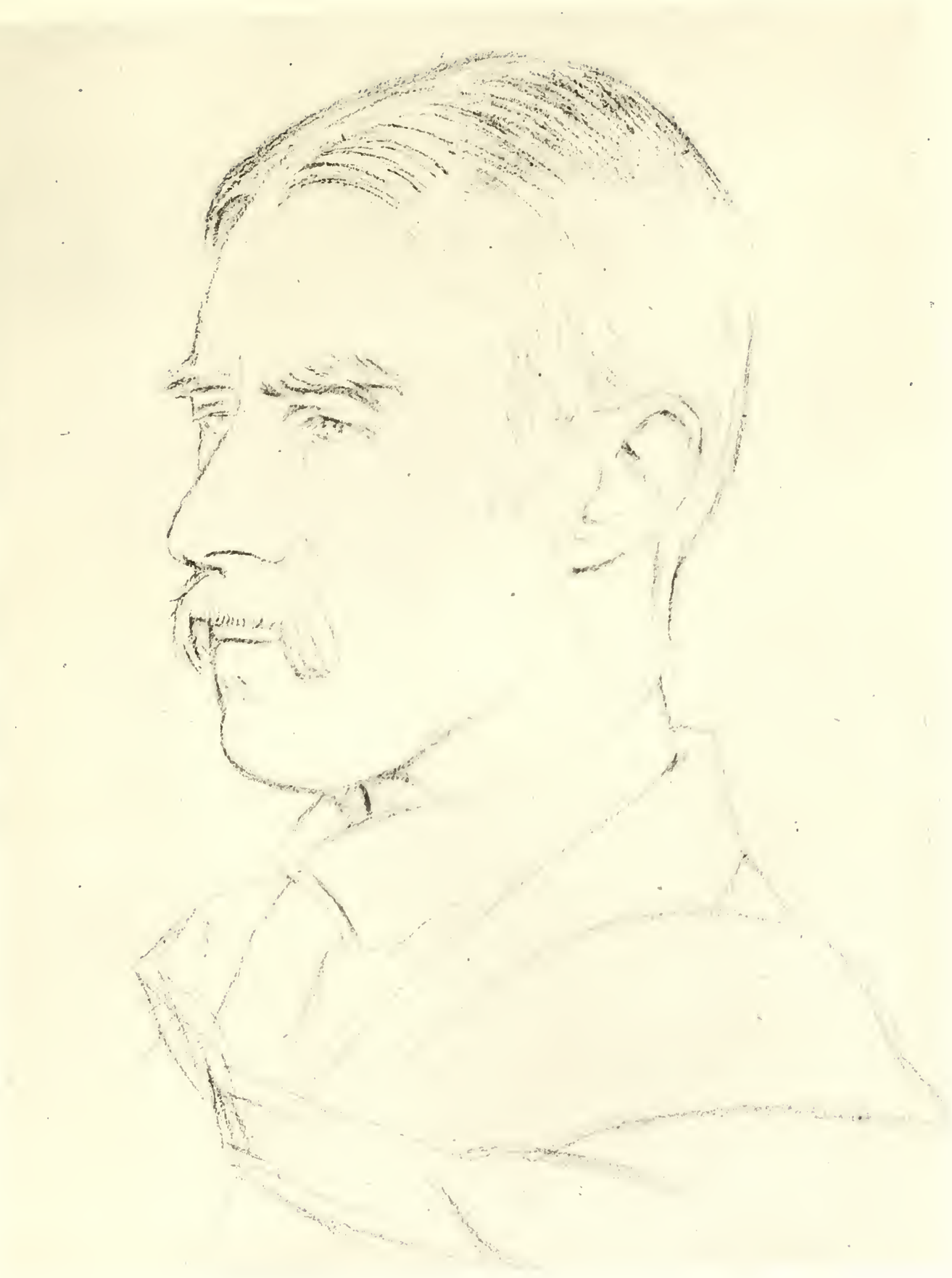
> And round that early laurelled head
> Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
> And find unwithered on its curls
> The garland briefer than a girl's.

And here too he speaks with fresh ease in the classic manner of English lyrical poets:

> Bring, in this timeless grave to throw,
> No cypress, sombre on the snow;
> Snap not from the bitter yew
> His leaves that live December through;
> Break no rosemary, bright with rime
> And sparkling to the cruel clime.

It is at once old and new, familiar and vivid.

That so small a book should present so sharp a figure in an atmosphere so clear, is the last tribute to A. E. Housman. The figure of *A Shropshire Lad* is one whose chief energy is action rather than thought; one for whom life holds change, passion, glory, shame; one who will easily avoid the gravest failure—failure to live intensely. Looking at the figure, as he emerges from these sixty-three lyrics and stands salient before you, the full proof of A. E. Housman's genius is seen in this, that he has created that figure neither larger nor smaller than life.



W. H. HUDSON

W. H. HUDSON

How many epoch-making works have gone into the pulping vat, since "El Ombu" appeared.

There is no new way to pay old debts in spite of Massinger. From the beginning of the world good taste has governed all the arts.

The greatest artists have been eminently sane. The so-called artistic temperament did not seem to have existed for them. They all went about, carefully carrying on the ordinary business of life, paying their debts (when they were able) and bearing their life's burden patiently, knowing the end would set them free.

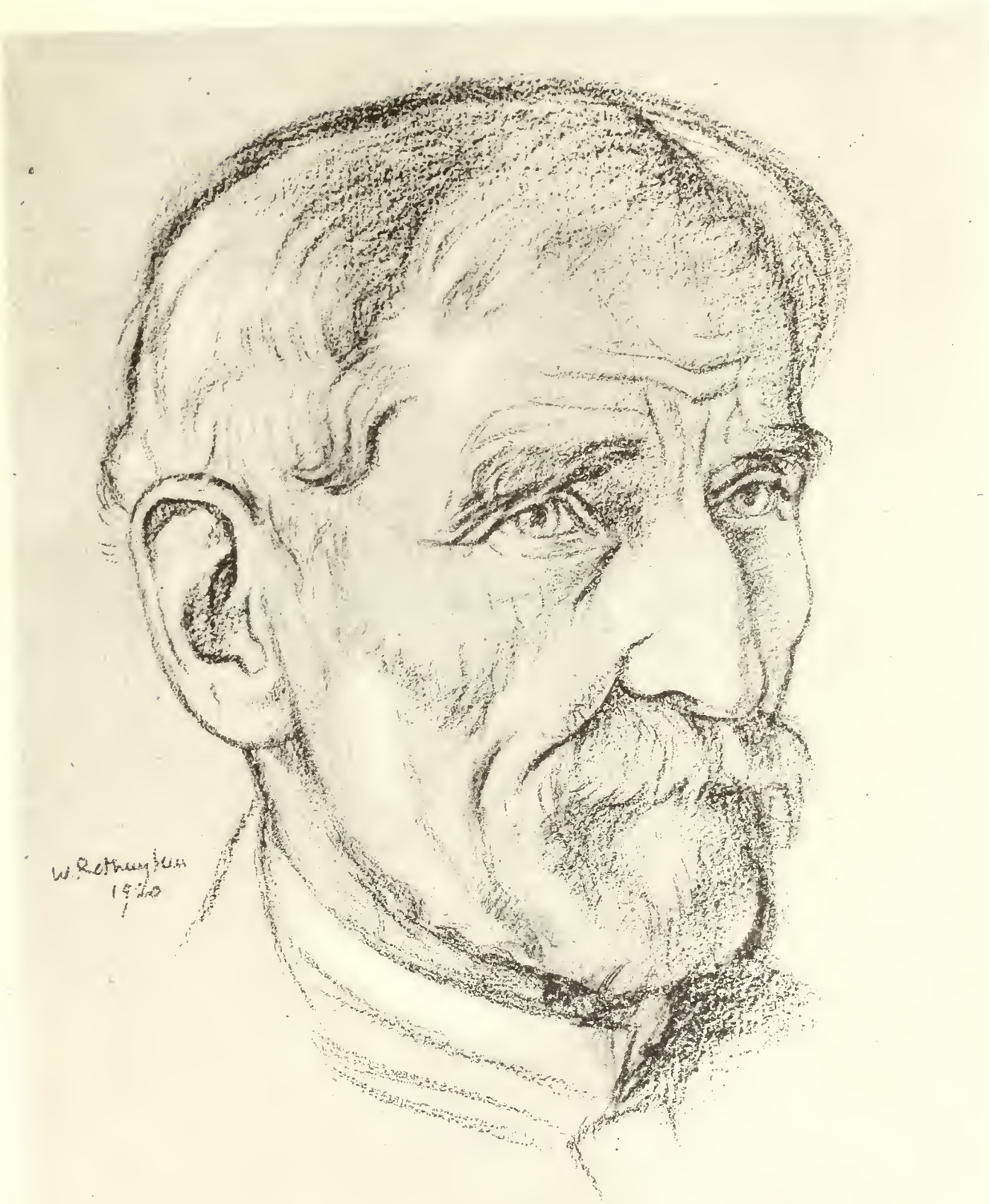
Genius digs the foundation of the edifice it rears, not knowing consciously that it is building for eternity, and works so unobtrusively that the passer-by seldom perceives a Parthenon is being built.

Hudson neither broke into the mystery of our yeasty sea, heralded with paragraphs, or blare of rattling tin-trumpets, nor was he, as was Paul of Tarsus, born free, but gained his freedom at great price, paying for it with neglect and poverty.

He has emerged at last and takes his place in the first rank of English writers. Perhaps he is a class alone, for who that writes to-day, has his strange, searching charm, his great simplicity, his love of animals; not as a man, being a god to them and knowing all things: but humble as themselves, humble because his genius shows him that in the scheme of nature one thing certifies the other, and the parts glorify the whole.

Versed, in his youth, more in the use of the "lazo" and the "boleadoras" than the pen, I think his love of nature set him on to write instinctively, just as a gaucho child, putting its little naked toe upon the horse's knee, climbs up and rides because he is compelled to ride or to remain a maimed and crippled animal, travelling the plains on foot.

So does a Magellanic owl, when once full-feathered, launch itself into the air and float off noiselessly.


W. Rothenstein
1920

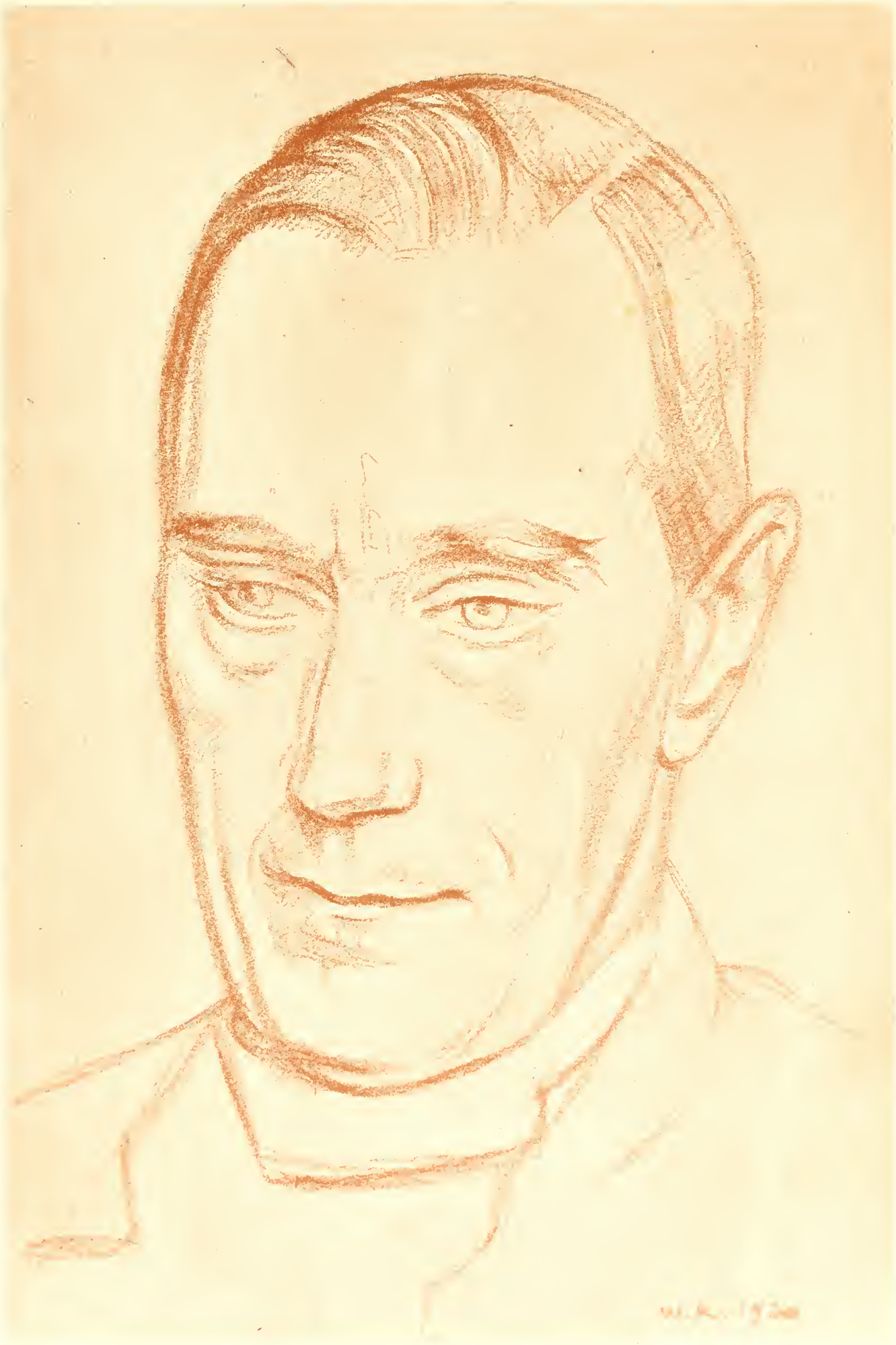
THE DEAN OF SAINT PAUL'S

THE DEAN OF SAINT PAUL'S

It is not rare that a man hostile to the spirit of his age, a Swift or a Voltaire, should reflect it perfectly. Current sophistries and superstitions are perpetuated in controversy. Protagoras lives for us in Plato, and Jurieu's doctrine of irresponsible democracy in Bossuet's reply. Perhaps some feminine characteristic is latent in all democracies, that being persecuted they endure, and bless those that curse them: the delicate sensibility of women found a subtile flattery in the monkish phrase, *instrumentum diaboli*; reaching to a like stimulus our own age accepts Dean Inge as not least among its prophets.

The face shows a gravity almost sombre, the eyes an inflexible watchfulness, the mouth a theological severity, and these are qualities of his style. So admirable a piece of work as his *Plotinus*, could have been written only by one, for whom mysticism had an almost irresistible fascination: but the mind is divided; it is too preoccupied by politics, ethics, science, even by theological dogmas and discipline; it is too reasonable, perhaps, ever to attain to the beatific vision, in which opposites are reconciled, and things incompatible admitted equally. It is too partial; for the mystic, like the agnostic, ends in complete negation, when all sense, mind, and desire, and even the denial of them are extinguished in the eternal silence which is God.

In external questions, truth is negligible, since it is imposed on us. Outside the ideal world of our own creating, there is only a blind action of natural forces, which the mind of man will always disregard. The future is not determined by reason; but reason and those obscure reactions to circumstances, which we call instincts, are molten together, precipitated into the incoherent effects of action, by a sudden passion of the will. Progress is change, a dispersion of forces and values without object: science only extends the field of human error. Though recognizing that reason has denied a material, as it had denied previously a spiritual progress, humanity obeys its instincts: it is this complex and illogical process that Dean Inge reflects so clearly; but of which he is also, in some sense, the child.



THOMAS EDWARD LAWRENCE

THOMAS EDWARD LAWRENCE

He is not so young as he looks and he is hardly anything that he is popularly supposed to be — not Daredevil for example, nor Knight-errant nor Visionary nor Romantick. The things he wants not to be are quite numerous; but things he could be, if he wanted, are more numerous still. He is not fond of being anything, and official categories do not fit him. He can do most things and does some; but to expect him to do a particular thing is rash. Besides being anti-official, he dislikes fighting and Arab clothes, Arab ways, and social functions, civilized or uncivilized. He takes a good deal of trouble about all things but quite a great deal about repelling the people whom he attracts, including all sorts and conditions of men and some sorts and conditions of women; but he is beginning to be discouraged by consistent failure, which now and then he does not regret. He has as much interest as faith in himself: but those who share the last are not asked to share the first. He makes fun of others or kings of them, but if anyone tries to make either one or the other of him he runs away. Pushing (not himself) he finds more congenial than leading and he loves to push the unsuspecting body: but if it does not get on as fast as he thinks it should, he pushes it into the gutter and steps to the front. What he thinks is his Law. To think as fast or as far as he thinks is not easy, and still less easy is it to follow up with such swift action. He can be as persuasive as positive; and the tale of those he has hocussed into doing something they never meant to do and are not aware that they are doing, is long. It is better to be his partner than his opponent, for when he is not bluffing, he has a way of holding the aces: and he can be ruthless, caring little what eggs he breaks to make his omelettes and ignoring responsibility either for the shells or for the digestion of the mess. Altogether a force felt by many but not yet fully gauged either by others or by himself. He should go far; but it may be in driving lonely furrows where at present few expect him to plough.

W. R.
1920

JOHN MASEFIELD

JOHN MASEFIELD

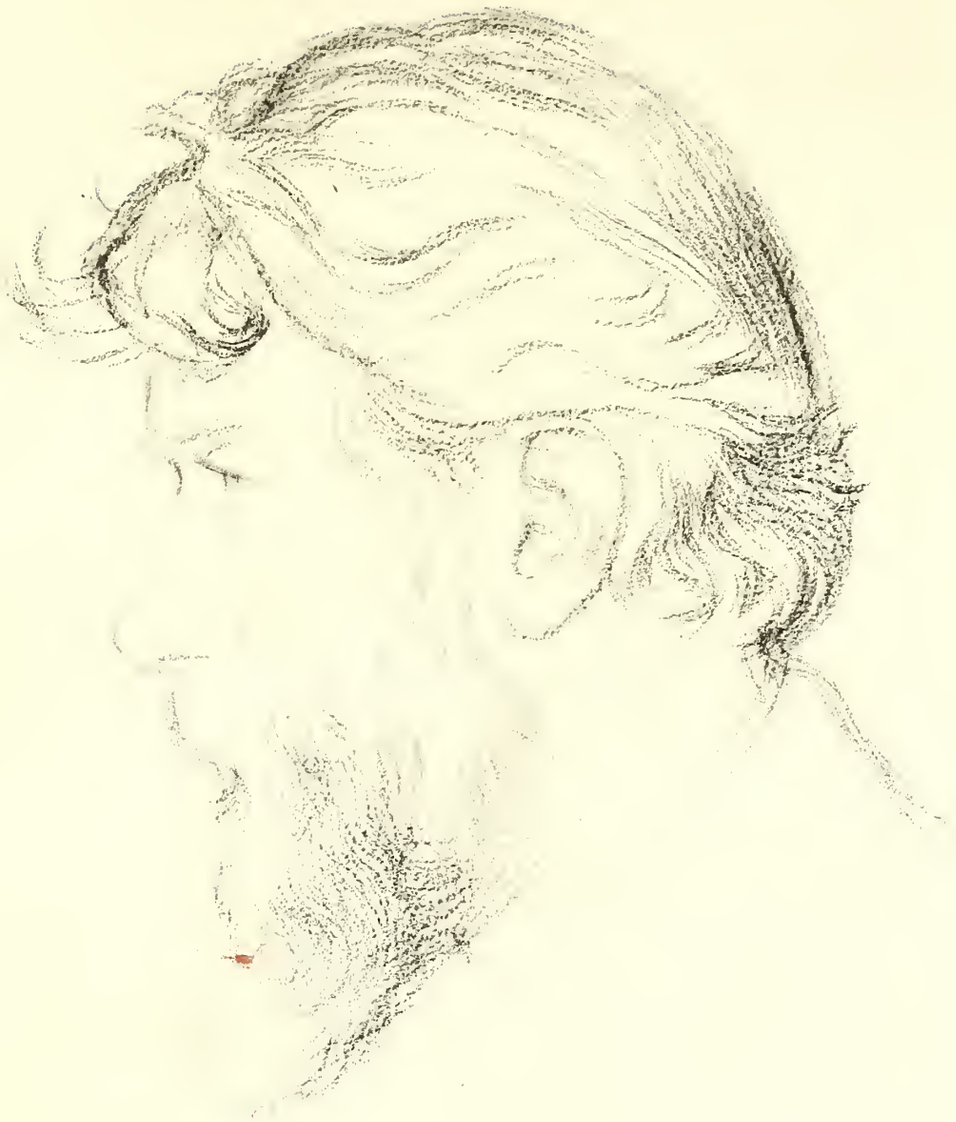
Masefield, the poet—as it concerns the public to know him—was probably born in the first years of the seventeenth-century. He was country and not town bred, that seems certain. For some part of his youth he was probably at sea; we may judge this by the ease with which he writes of all seafaring things; otherwise the episode is only important in his career if it burned deeper into his consciousness his close inheritance from Elizabethan England, its passionate ambition for adventure into new worlds of fact and thought, its suddenly developed sense of national worth and honour. We note his reverence for learning, too, see him next, if chance allowed, drawn towards Oxford. And if so he surely found himself in Falkland's circle, following their trend from poetry to philosophy, much at ease in that short golden age of English culture. From such a happy time and circumstance we might well be dating his maturer work as we now know it; gentle, high of thought, classic in outline, traditionalist, but not constrained, tolerant, stoical in obligation, Christian in consideration; the work of a patrician mind. But that was not to be. Political catastrophe shattered the England of those dreams. And only now, within this decade or so, does it seem that we at last may be resolving the issue of the Puritan challenge; its spiritual bravery absorbed and ourselves purged of its dross, its flocks-and-herds Old Testament materialism.

But Masefield comes to his inheritance now and already he has enlarged it for yet younger men; witness their regard for him, safe token that he is of the legitimate line. For he is so infinitely English; genuinely, unselfconsciously so. Therefore, he writes poetry as naturally as he speaks, writing of common English things, his poet's task to make us feel that England in every blade of grass, in every brain, in every stroke of hand can be, if so she will be, worthily alive.

GEORGE RUSSELL (A. E.)

GEORGE RUSSELL (A. E.)

When we mention names such as Milton or Velasquez or Beethoven we speak of people in whom there is instantly recognized one peculiar and fundamental excellence, and the task of appraising them is facilitated by being limited. Of certain others, such as Shakespeare or da Vinci or Michael Angelo, this is not true — Their energies overflow any possible vessel, and under whatever examination they remain as unknown as beings from another sphere. This enormous and baffling energy is also to be found in Mr. George Russell (A.E.), so that while he is known to some as a painter of delightful pictures others recognize him mainly as a poet, while many, again, think of him as an expert on economics, as a distinguished social theorist, as a mystic philosopher, as a terrific controversalist, or even as a brilliant and tireless conversationalist. This energy is the very hall-mark of genius, and whether the world wins or loses by a dispersal rather than a concentration of energy is a matter for speculation. "The world" is a large matter and one may not speak with much assurance about it. If A. E. had not written poems would he have been a better painter? If he had foregone painting and poetry would he now be the greatest writer of English prose living? These are questions full of intellectual interest, but in the long run they do not matter in the least, for if the person spoken of is free from worldly ambition he is not affected in any way. The work of an artist is only incidentally cultural, he is one who liberates himself for himself and explains himself to himself. It is as a poet that the writer personally conceives A.E., and, with the sole exception of Mr. Yeats, there is no person living worthy of being measured against him. But in this art he requires imaginative reading, and he may, for a long time yet, be invisible to the average book-buyer.



G. BERNARD SHAW

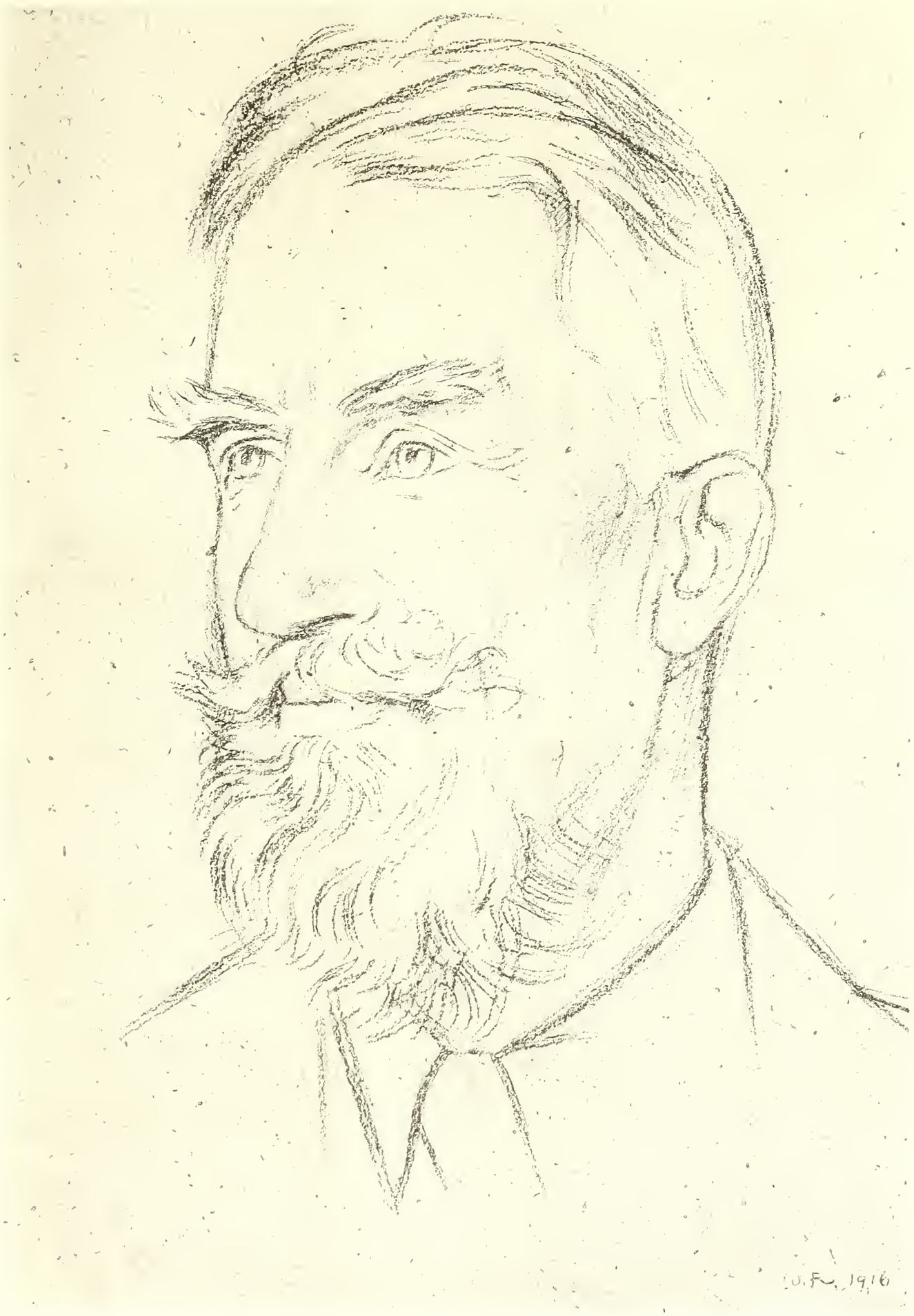
MR. G. BERNARD SHAW

Mr. Shaw, like most great writers when they become familiar, is now taken for granted; people, especially the young, enjoy his writing without giving him credit for their enjoyment. He has ceased to surprise and would do so only if he wrote badly; but posterity, after he has been forgotten for a while, will discover that he is one of the great masters of comedy. People complain now that he is not like the other Great Masters; but they are not like each other. Each of them has written a new kind of comedy; and so has Mr. Shaw. Each of them, probably has been called cruel, but there is an almost morbid humanity in all of them which they try to conceal by one device or another. Mr. Shaw is as bad at concealing it as any of them and grows worse as he gets older. It becomes more and more plain that he is a Don Quixote who has never gone mad, an Irish Gentleman of the old school who loves good stories and simple people, even when English, and for whom chivalry is the most necessary of all virtues.

Mr. Shaw has almost made a parade of the modernity of his tastes; but I doubt whether he really likes even Ibsen. He has supported Ibsen out of chivalry, but his secret idol is Shakespeare and still more Mozart. Indeed he might say with a slight alteration of Prior's Ode:-

> The Merchant, to secure his treasure,
> Conveys it in a borrowed name:
> Wagner may serve to grace my measure,
> But Mozart is my real flame.

Mozart, and everything he means, is what Mr. Shaw enjoys; and he remains, perhaps, a little puzzled by his own tastes in art and in human beings. After all, he sees, the Christian virtues are what he really likes and the artists whom no one doubts, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Mozart. Mankind are not so far wrong, at least in their worship, as he once believed; and he himself likes mankind better than he thought. So posterity will like him better than he expects; and few of our writers are so sure of being read by it.


W.F. 1916

SIR J. J. THOMSON, O.M.

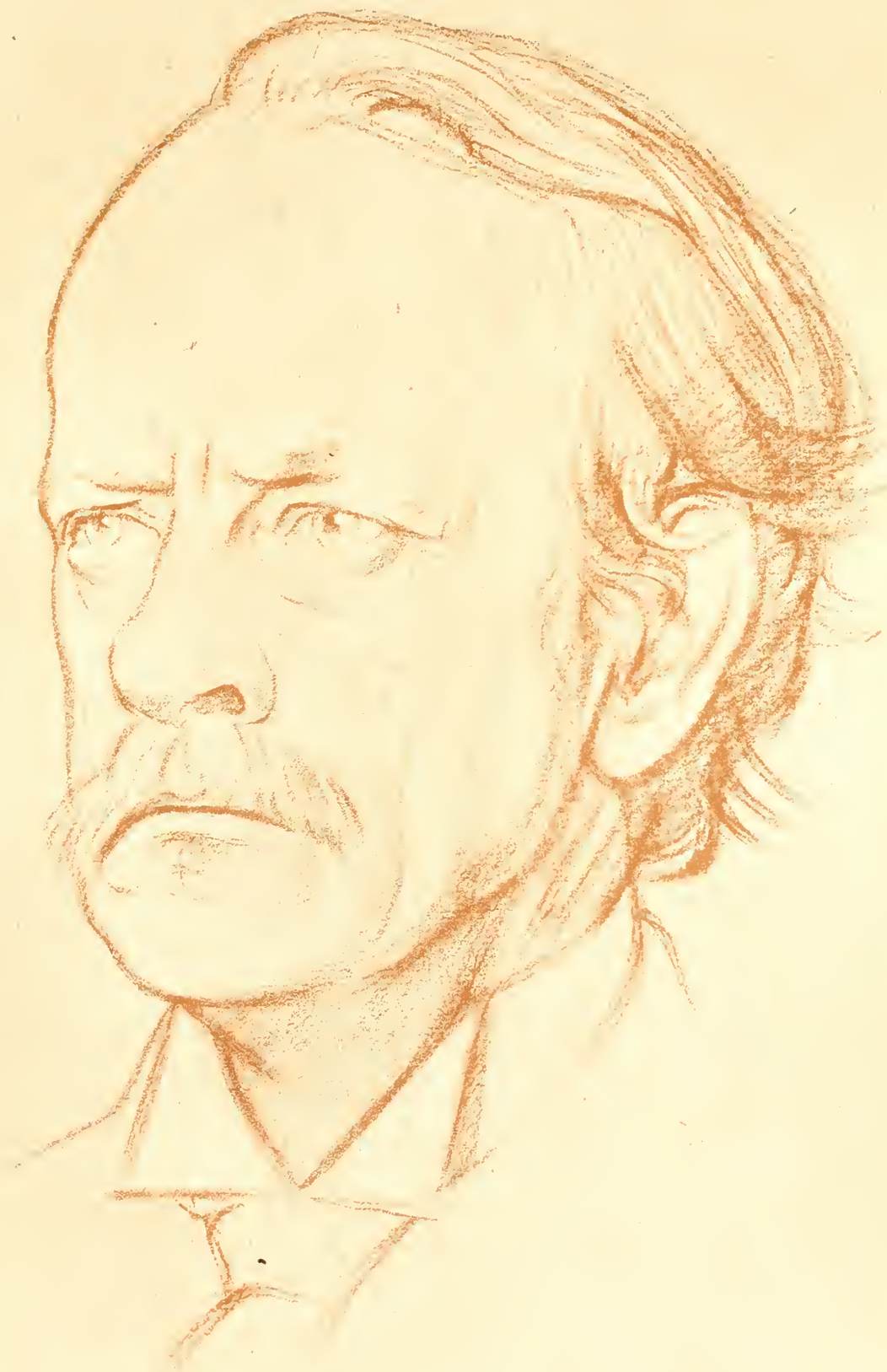
SIR J. J. THOMSON, O.M.

The University of Cambridge takes rank in the fore-front of the intellectual centres of the English-speaking race, aud it is expected that the Master of Trinity shall be among her most representative men. What sort of man then is it whose recent nomination by the Crown to that high office has been received with such universal acclaim?

The great reputation of Sir Joseph John Thomson was not acquired in the domain of public affairs. His life-work has rather been in the most retired fields of effort purely intellectual, whose harvest yet can lead to more enduring fame than the most brilliant service of a place-man to the transient age for which he works.

He was destined to open up for the Cavendish Laboratory new fields of renown. By unsparing work and thought the experience and apparatus requisite for novel and ambitious experimental designs were in the course of years built up. The culmination came twenty-three years ago when he was able to announce the deviation, and scrutiny in detail, of the primordial moving objects, minute beyond previous conception, which are functioning all around us as the ultimate foundation of light and electricity, even perhaps of matter itself. The band of enthusiasts who were then engaged with him in translating into firm experimental fact the relations of their electrons, which had previously existed only in shadowy form in theory, could hardly have imagined that in twenty years those elusive particles, moving at speeds almost incredible, would have become so amenable to control by gradually improved technique as to form a sure foundation for signalling across space, and even for the direct transmission of speech and music over thousands of miles,—or that the rights of use of the simple appliances evolved for these applications would have become the subject of of international legal controversy involving vast monetary interests.

An investigator who is conspicuous in bringing about such results does not lack full international appreciation: it is appropriate that at home he should be President of the Royal Society, while his possession of the Order of Merit even adds to the international prestige of that select distinction.



H. G. WELLS

H. G. WELLS

There are two passages in Henry James's letters which express pretty accurately, our view of Mr. Wells's place among other writers of our time, and give a description, true and illuminating, of the essential nature of his mind and genius. They come in letters addressed to Mr. Wells himself, and the first is this: "And nothing matters after the fact that you are to me so much the most interesting representational and ironic genius and faculty, of our Anglo-Saxon world and life, in these bemuddled days, that you stand out intensely vivid and alone, making nobody else signify at all." The other passage is as follows: "Your big feeling for life, your capacity for chewing up the thickness of the world in such enormous mouthfuls, while you fairly slobber, so to speak, with the multitudinous taste ....." We might almost leave Mr. Wells at that, but it is pleasant to attempt some little elaboration.

Many a little mind has run hither and thither, poking itself into this and that and shrilling its comments. It is when one considers the quality of Mr. Wells's that the variousness and aboundingness of its achievement are so amazing, stupefying. It is above all a greedy mind, insatiable of life and thought, but this immense avidity never betrays its clearness and subtlety of vision. There are the early quasi-scientific wonder tales, which might well be called a sort of Arabian Nights of our age; there are the earlier psychological novels, and the novels in which life is just "chewed up" as Henry James says, for its own sake; there are the later sociological novels which expound a thesis, or envisage a large set of circumstances, and such a feat of reconstruction as "Mr. Britling"; there are the direct sociological tracts like his Utopia, and a multitude of direct essays on the affairs and tendencies of mankind, and there is the History of the World, of which it is enough now, perhaps, if one asks what other living writer could have the courage to attempt such a task and the capacity to see it through.

It would be absurd to suppose that all this variety of achievement could please everybody all the time. There is no room in this place for criticism, and scarcely for preferences. We would say, however, that after all acknowledgment has been made to Mr. Wells's philosophy and sociology, his acute eye for tendencies and his zeal for a justly ordered world, and after all appreciation of the fire and tenderness in his probing of human passions, what is of the greatest and most lasting value in his work is its record, vivid, forceful, lit up by ironic humour but searchingly true, of the English life of his time.

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